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ABSTRACT

In 1981, a study was conducted at three rural community colleges in Maryland to determine whether there was a difference between the college grade point averages (GPAs) of first-time, full-time students who applied early for admissions and the GPAs of students who applied late. The study analyzed applications and GPA data for a total of 700 subjects, including 503 early applicants and 197 late applicants. The study revealed that the GPA of early applicants was higher than that of late applicants at each institution. The results suggest that application timing may help to identify a potential at-risk population for whom early intervention and proper counseling might help decrease the rate of attrition. (RO)

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A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF GRADE POINT AVERAGES OF EARLY AND LATE APPLICANTS TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

First time, full-time students who applied early for admissions to three rural community colleges, one located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, one located in Northwestern Maryland and one located in Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridor, were compared with those students who applied late on the basis of grade point averages. It was hypothesized that students who applied early for admission would have higher grade point averages than students who applied late. This study found that the early applicants did achieve higher grade point averages.

A Comparison of Grade Point Averages of Early and Late Applicants to Community Colleges

The problem of predicting the academic success of post-secondary students has been addressed extensively. Astin (1971) reports that thousands of studies over the years have established that high school grade point averages are the most valid indicator of college grades, and that American College Testing Scores (ACT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores (SAT) are also good predictors of college grades. High school grade point averages, ACT, and SAT scores continue to be used as predictors for college grade point averages since it is assumed that there is some degree of stability between past and future behavior and that those factors which contributed to the success in the past will continue to do so in the future. However, Dalton (1976) concluded that ability to use SAT scores and high school achievement to predict college grades is decreasing. Schade (1977) found ACT scores to be only poor to moderate indicators of college grade point averages. Lindquist (1975) found that ACT scores had negligible application in predicting achievement in community college vocational programs.

Griffin (1978) indicated that using high school grade point averages may not be appropriate as a predictor for community college students because of the basic differences in the kinds of students attending these schools. Students attending four year institutions are generally younger and are normally recent high

school graduates. Griffen suggests that maturation may effect the relationship between past and present academic performance. The older community college student may be more mature and thus more motivated than the younger typical four year college student. This maturity and motivation may account for some of the variability in the relationship between past and present academic behavior.

Another possible reason for a decline in the relationship between past and present academic performance in community college students may be that those who apply early are more motivated toward attending college than those who apply shortly before school starts. One might expect that students who apply early are more committed to college, committed to their decision to go to college and consequently are more motivated toward attaining higher grades. Students who apply late are less committed and correspondingly less motivated toward attaining high grades. One study which tends to oppose this position was conducted by Ragan (1973). In this study it was found that no relationship existed between application date and later grade point averages. However, this study was conducted at San Antonio Community College which requires students to submit either SAT or ACT scores. Obviously, since these tests were taken previous to their applying to a school, these students must have been seriously considering attending a post secondary school. These data might be different if the students were attending a school with open enrollments that did not require the taking of SAT or ACT tests.

It is the purpose of this study to determine if there is a difference in the grade point averages attained in college by first-time, full-time community college students who apply early for admission at an open admission community college as compared to those who apply late. It is specifically hypothesized that students who apply early to an open admission community college will attain higher grades during their first semester than those who apply late.

Method

Subjects were first-time, full time students (12 credit hours or greater) applying for admission at three community colleges representing the cultural diversity of the State of Maryland. These community colleges were located on the Eastern Shore, the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, and the Northwestern portion of the state. A total of 700 subjects were used with 80 (46 early, 34 late), 222 (179 early, 43 late), and 398 (278 early, 120 late) from the Eastern Shore, Northwestern area, and the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, respectively.

Subjects were considered early applicants if they applied between 01/01/81 and 7/31/81 and late applicants if they applied after 08/01/81. Data were gathered from each institution from their data base systems. All data was anonymous. Data were analyzed using a 2 x 3 factorial analysis of variance with two

levels of application date and three levels of institution with grade point average (G. P. A.) from the Fall term of 1981 as the dependent variable.

Results

G. P. A. means for the early application groups are presented in Table 1. It can be seen from this table that the grade point averages for early applicants was higher than that of late applicants at each institution. This is consistent with what was hypothesized. Table 2 presents a summary of the 2 x 3 factorial analysis of variance. Results of this analysis revealed a significant main effect for application date, $F(1,694) = 5.082$, $p. < .024$ supporting the hypothesis.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest a potential at risk population, failure to academically succeed, may exist in open admission community colleges. The results indicate that there is a difference in students applying early for admission to open admission community colleges and those applying late, and that this difference results in the early group obtaining a higher mean G. P. A. than the late date of application group. Identifying this at risk population allows for early intervention and with proper counseling might help decrease the rate of

attrition of these students. A reason for this difference might be related to the motivation of the applicants with early applying students being more motivated to attend post secondary institutions and late applicants being less motivated. Future research should examine this issue in more depth. In addition, it should also include part-time students, since they constitute a large percentage of the community college population and control for age and high school G. P. A.

TABLE 1
Camparsion of Mean G.P.A. for
Early and Late Applicants

Community Colleges		E	L
Eastern Shore Area	M	2.27	1.90
	n	(46)	(34)
Northwestern Area	M	2.62	2.47
	n	(179)	(43)
Balt/Wash Metro Area	M	2.58	2.38
	n	(278)	(120)

TABLE 2
2 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance Between
Application Date and School
with Grade Point Average
As Dependant Variable

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Signif of F
Main Effects	20.484	3	6.828	5.609013	0.001
SCH	11.638	2	5.819	4.790427	0.009
APPD	6.187	1	6.187	5.082201	0.024
2-way Interactions	0.615	2	0.307	0.2524020	0.777
SCH APPD	0.615	2	0.307	0.2524020	0.777
Explained	21.098	5	4.220	3.466369	0.004
Residual	844.811	694	1.217		
TOTAL	865.909	699	1.239		

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